

Mr. Erik Hazelhoff  
(two copies)

William E. Griffith

Report on a conversation held between Mr. Thomas Donovan, Mr. William E. Griffith, Mr. Horace Nickels and Mr. Frank Jones (U.S. Consulate General, Munich) and Mr. Samuel Lyon on December 23, 1958.

December 29, 1958. *✓*  
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Mr. Thomas Donovan, First Secretary of the American Embassy in Warsaw and until three months ago Polish desk officer in the Department of State, discussed the political situation in Poland at some length and also gave his opinion of RFE broadcasting.

Mr. Donovan was interested in the fact that RFE has secured copies of the Twelfth Plenum documents and asked several questions about their use in broadcasting. Mr. Donovan expressed himself as being generally opposed to the use of secret Party documents for broadcast purposes, saying that there is a great difference between what the Party says it intends to do and what it actually does and can do.

When the question of the Swiatko disclosures came up Mr. Donovan admitted this was an exception. He also stated that he was against the use in general of refugee reports referring explicitly to the programs concerning the prison conditions in which Rozanski and Fejgin are held and the program series devoted to the more or less "new class" disclosures by Mrs. Ihnatowicz, formerly a servant in the household of the Minister of Interior Trade Lesz. He apparently opposes this sort of programming, regardless of whether the material is firmly sourced or not, as being "over-sensational". In addition, he is very much opposed to the more or less exposé type of broadcasting such as the commentary on Nina Andrycz, the wife of Premier Cyrankiewicz, which he considered rather low-level dealing in scandal. (The fact that the rumors of Cyrankiewicz's wife are apparently widely spread in Poland and that RFE broadcasting concerning this phenomenon could hardly be considered an exposé seemed to make no difference. In addition the "new class" series already referred to is supported by considerable evidence that though there is some evidence that Party people attempt to diminish the more flagrant aspects of their material success, they still do to a large extent enjoy privileges such as the use of State cars, the use of ~~State cars~~ expensive villas, State-paid travelling and the prerogative of shopping at exclusive stores which are run primarily for the convenience of ministers and higher Party functionaries). It was pointed out to Mr. Donovan that where there is no basis for attack, such as in the case of Mr. Gomulka who, according to all reports, lives relatively austerely, these sort of reports are not broadcast.

Mr. Donovan also was particularly distressed by what he called low-level humor, especially in regard to the Polish Tea Party Series, describing this as something which could hardly have any appeal. (This is directly in contradiction to most of the

reports from our Audience Analysis Section which always accords Radio Tea Party a rather high recall index, which would indicate that whether people approve of it or not, at least for some reason they remember it. ) Mr. Donovan suggested that Radio Tea Party and other humor and cabaret scripts be reviewed more frequently. He was, however, largely in agreement with both the substantive content and presentation of political commentary, especially that designed for Party intelligentsia.

As far as retrogression in Poland is concerned, Mr. Donovan stated that one could not see very many traces of it. He reported that the countryside appears more or less prosperous in comparison to other satellite countries, especially Czechoslovakia and that lots of new building is being carried on there. He stated that he expects no serious retrogression in the countryside nor any major collectivization attempt.

As far as workers' councils are concerned, Mr. Donovan stated that there was never much enthusiasm for them in the first place and that since there was never objectively much chance for their further development this did not represent an area of actual retrogression.

As far as the Church-State situation is concerned, Mr. Donovan stated that the danger lay in local conflict which could be initiated by either side. The actual danger would result from local excesses not centrally directed since it is obvious that both Church and regime do not want an open conflict. He stated that RFE's coverage of the Church-State situation was especially unfortunate last summer in that RFE took too vigorous a line against the regime. It was pointed out that RFE is expected to comment on such events if only to publicize them to the Polish people by giving both sides, and one could hardly expect RFE to take the side of the regime in such a commentary. It was also pointed out that special effort was taken to make sure that the Church position was broadcast by RFE during the summer. The difficulty of remaining absolutely impartial in such a situation is that of falling victim to the regime's position on the intolerance of the Church and thus finding one's self in the position of being neutral where the Church is supported by 95% of the population and the Party perhaps one or two percent.

As far as pressure from the Soviet Union is concerned, Mr. Donovan proposed the hypothesis that since nothing is ever heard about direct Soviet pressure, this means that it is so important as to be a closely-held secret and as a consequence must exist in great measure. Mr. Donovan stated that most Poles are intimidated by the Soviet Union as a great irrational force, as he regards it himself. He stated several times that this was his basis for evaluating the Polish situation and that whatever was said in Poland must be considered in the light of the continuous threat of arbitrary Soviet power. He stated that this was one reason why Gomulka had to silence the writers. If the writers were permitted to write as they pleased there would undoubtedly have been a series of diatribes against the Soviet Union.

Mr. Donovan also advanced other arguments to support his thesis that there was less retrogression in Poland than people outside supposed. He discussed the fact that Western newspapers are for sale in kiosks, that travel visas are issued in great numbers, and that people speak and act freely but that there is an awareness of the power of the Soviet Union which colors all

their actions. He stated that the early years of Stalinism have left a scar on most people which will never be eradicated.

Throughout the discussions one could see that Mr. Donovan placed very little weight upon the words of the Party leaders and the resolutions taken at Party meetings. His primary assumption is that directives and speeches are largely for external (Soviet) consumption and that in actuality mean little or nothing. He is of the opinion that even if the Party did possess the necessary strength to carry out its declarations it probably would not produce any greater degree of retrogression than witnessed so far. He admitted that the regime is probably using the threat of Soviet intervention to back up its policies but appeared to ascribe a much greater degree of Soviet influence on the so-called Polish retreat from October to the fact that the Party is actually attempting to demonstrate conformity in certain areas due to what might be a more extreme resolution of Polish problems by outside intervention if some degree of conformity were not exhibited by the PZPR. His position was essentially that regardless of what the Party says about, for example, culture that these things are mostly words and that nothing ever happens. This he ascribes to the Party drive for external verbal conformity and states that since these words are not translated into action they are largely meaningless. He stated that almost everybody on the outside is too inclined to interpret things ideologically. It appears that he attributes the lack of any concrete expression of Party plans in greater measure to a lack of Party desire to execute its program rather than sheer weakness on the part of the Party, though he allows this is significant. Thus, though there was no great difference on the present assessment of the political situation within

Poland, RFE's constant vigilance for possible signs of retrogression appeared to him to be illogical since his point d'appui is that the Party would not undertake drastic retrogressive moves even if it could. The major difficulty is that the Party is in no position to execute all of its programmatic designs and as a consequence in terms of evaluation his position is entirely hypothetical.

The essential differences in opinion amount, as far as broadcasting is concerned, to Mr. Donovan's disapproval of the use of refugee reports, whether well-sourced or not, the reporting of "new-class" manifestations and of secret documents, and the use of comedy-type programs for mass appeal. As far as programming on political subjects is concerned, Mr. Donovan apparently believes that RFE should not comment on regime statements which appear to be retrogressive moves since the regime does not really mean what it says. The difference on the internal analytical position is a result of the difference of the basic premise as to the regime's motivations and intentions and the degree to which Soviet influence is responsible for Polish Party decisions and pronouncements.

We continue to adhere to our position and do not regard Mr. Donovan's comments re analysis or programming as valid. As to analysis, we consider that retrogressive moves to date have primarily resulted from Polish initiatives and not from Soviet pressure. Furthermore, (see the most recent long analyses) some retrogression will probably continue. Finally, our basic guidances certainly require us to combat it.